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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
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DEPT FOR EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PHUM KWMN KDEM AM

SUBJECT: ELECTIONS LIKELY TO BRING A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE  
IN WOMEN MPS, FROM A LOW BASE

REF: A) 06 YEREVAN 1364 B) 06 YEREVAN 946

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accordingly.

**¶11.** (SBU) One relative bright spot on the political stage when party lists were released March 1: the potential for a 100-percent increase in the number of parliamentary seats held by women. A National Democratic Institute (NDI) analysis of the lists shows that women make up an average of 22 percent of each party's proportional list. This is less than the 25 percent that NDI-sponsored women's forum (reftels) had been pushing, but it is much better than the 15 percent required by law. Several parties also placed women in higher positions on their party lists than had been done in the past, though less than the women's forum had requested. NDI staff estimate that, once the dust settles after May 12, women will likely occupy 12 to 14 parliamentary seats. They currently hold seven of 131 seats.

**¶12.** (SBU) NDI program director Taline Sanassarian characterized the analysis of the party lists as "cautiously good news." She and her staff noted that women who occupy high slots on a given party's list have in the past opted not to accept their seats, ceding them to the next name on the list -- more often than not a man. For that reason, she said it would be important for NDI and the other organizations involved in the women's forum to keep up the pressure on parties to follow through.

**¶13.** (SBU) COMMENT: The number of women on the party lists does represent a step forward, but it is one that was not at all difficult for the parties to take. Women have historically occupied such an embarrassingly low number of seats, that it would be difficult for the situation to worsen. Particularly in the cases of parties that stand little chance of winning any seats at all, putting women on high on the lists may be an easy way to win plaudits from international observers.

GODFREY